

# Inspired note-taking

By Linda Twitchett

Recently a team of teachers and the teacher-librarian presented to the staff a review of the resources available in the school which support differentiated learning opportunities for students. Included in the presentation were techniques for taking account of prior knowledge, graphic organisers and *Reasonable* and *Inspiration* software.

The intention was to provide staff with a timely reminder of the resources at our disposal, prior to professional development revisiting differentiation. Not long after this, an opportunity was identified to introduce *Inspiration* to our Year 7 students in the context of their 'Chinese Festivals' research task.

In typical fashion, the start of the new school term presented our library with a number of bookings for the commencement of assessment tasks involving library research. Consultations with our teachers of Year 7 Chinese about the introduction of their Chinese Festivals assignment led to the suggestion by one learning mentor that the typical library presentation about aspects of resources and the research process be modified to include instruction in the use of *Inspiration* software. The surprising outcome of this suggestion was the implementation of a successful strategy for all 150 Year 7 students, using *Inspiration* for note-taking and the planning of their presentations for this assessment task.

## Year 7 Chinese Festivals

All the information students require about the task is included in a curriculum support page on the school intranet:

- details of the task (**Defining**);
- selected websites and other resource information (**Locating**);
- note-taking and bibliography templates (**Selecting**);
- requirements for **Organising** the information
- options for **Presenting**;
- assessment rubrics and self evaluation forms (**Evaluating**).

In this task, students are required to investigate a Chinese festival. They need to consider ways in which the festival is traditionally celebrated, including such things as costumes, food, traditions and setting. They are also required to put a case for the celebration of this festival in our city.

## From E-notetaking to inspired notetaking

All Year 7 students had previously received instruction in the library in electronic note-taking while working online, including strategies to reduce plagiarism. This had been successfully implemented in the context of an earlier Science task.

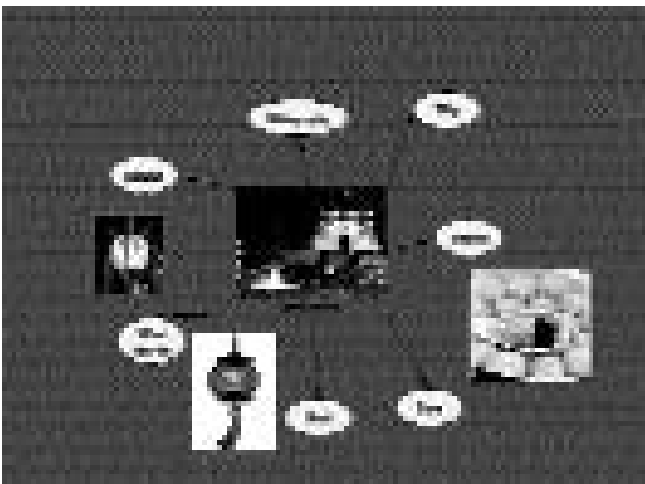


Rather than using the e-note-taking template provided in the curriculum support page, a new note-taking lesson was prepared using *Inspiration*. It was decided that this would be a brief introduction to the main features of the software, students keeping pace 'hands on', after which they could proceed on their own.

All classes were booked into the library for an introductory session led by a teacher-librarian. Features of the curriculum support page were highlighted, and the pathway to this resource reiterated. Few students indicated familiarity with *Inspiration* software and interest levels were high. Students entered the name of their topic at the centre of their diagram for their '**main idea**'. Using brainstorming and the requirements of their research task, students developed their *Inspiration* diagrams.

Using the '**create**' button, a bubble or symbol was created for each subheading of the topic, and also one for bibliography and for each of the higher order thinking questions embedded in the task. These were labeled, and students were shown how to add notes to each of these, in their own words, using the websites provided in the Chinese Festivals curriculum support page. No Googling was permitted!

Students were shown how to hide and open their notes and to how to change to the **Outline view** of their work. As note-taking and bibliography were included in assessment criteria,



students were able to print their outlines and submit them.

The students enjoyed learning how to add symbols from the **symbol library** and how to import web images into their diagram. Students quickly discovered for themselves how to use other features of the software.

## Chinese festivals, information literacy and VELS

This task addresses the standards for Level 5 of the VELS Interdisciplinary Learning Strand.

### "Information and Communication Technology – ICT for visualising thinking.

*At Level 5, students select and apply ICT tools and editing functions that support the filtering, classifying, representing, describing and organising of concepts, issues and ideas.*

Using *Inspiration* for note-taking was a fun way for students to organise their information.

### Information and Communication Technology – ICT for creating.

*Students . . . appropriately name and locate files . . . They apply criteria to evaluate the extent to which their information products meet user needs.*

Students were reminded of the process for naming and saving their work to their network area and of the importance of doing this regularly while working.

They were also provided with clear guidelines and assessment criteria for reviewing their work.

### Thinking Processes – Reasoning, processing and enquiry

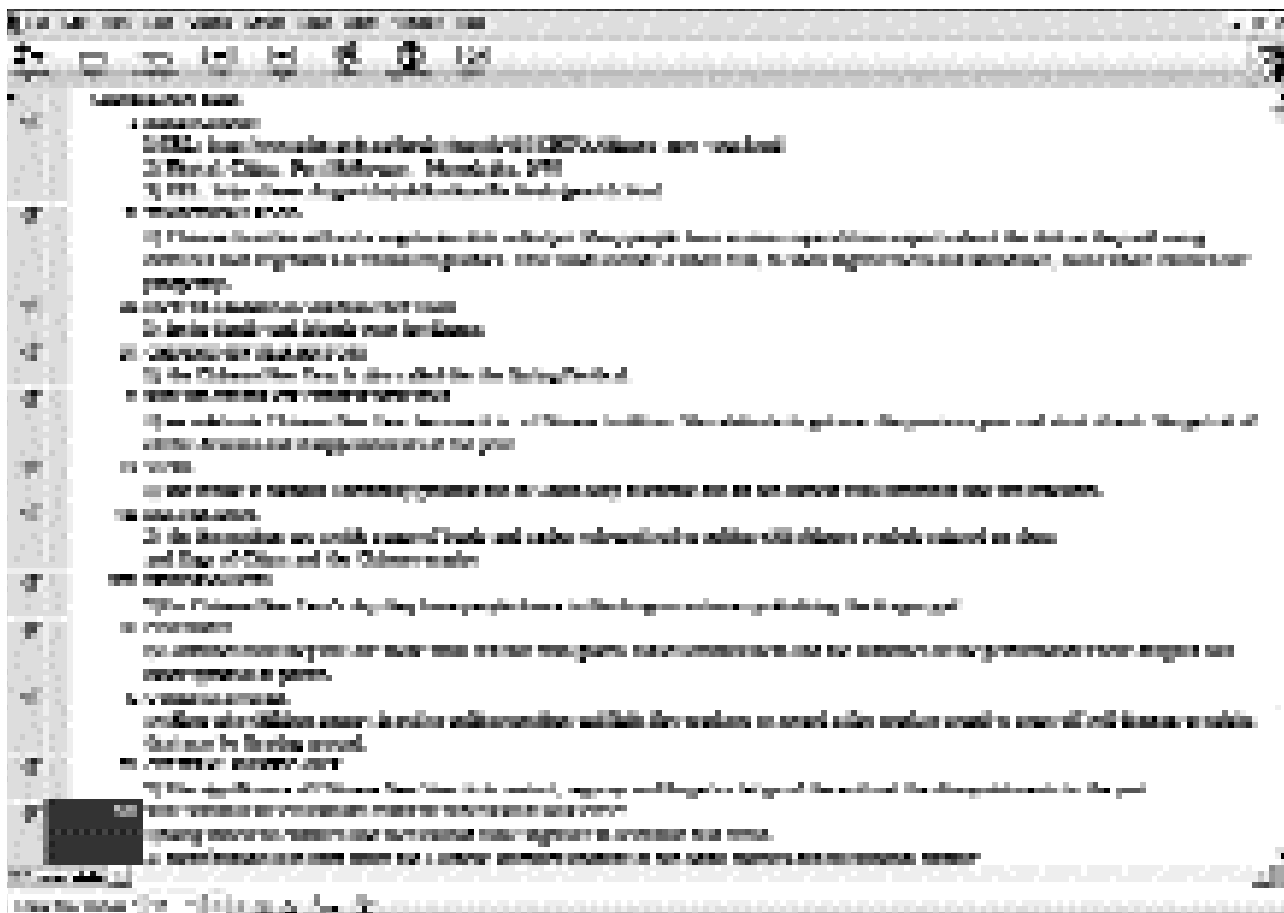
*Students . . . locate and select relevant information from varied sources.*

In this task, students were guided to selected print and internet resources.

### Thinking Processes – Creativity

*Students apply creative thinking strategies to explore possibilities and generate multiple options, problem definitions and solutions."*

In addition to gathering information about the



ways in which Chinese festivals are traditionally celebrated, students were asked to consider why it might be appropriate for these to be celebrated in our city (City of Monash) and how these festivities might take place.

**Thinking Processes – Reflection, evaluation and metacognition**

*Students . . . reflect on their thinking processes during their investigations.*

Students were required to complete a self-evaluation form in which they reflected on their thinking and learning processes.

**Conclusion**

Introducing our Year 7 students to the use of *Inspiration* software in the context of their Chinese festivals research task provided another strategy for note-taking particularly suited to visual learners. It was a successful means of integrating ICT in the curriculum and addressing

the standards for Level 5 of the interdisciplinary domain: Information and Communication Technology. It will be included in curriculum documentation as a feature of this task for next year.

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